



February 24, 2006

Via Electronic Filing

Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: Request to Extend The Temporary Universal Service Wireless
Lifeline Program Until June 1, 2006
In the Matter of Lifeline and Link-Up; WC Docket No. 03-109

Dear Ms. Dortch:

The temporary wireless universal service Lifeline program implemented last fall to assist survivors of Hurricane Katrina (“Katrina Lifeline Program”) is currently scheduled to expire on March 1, 2006.¹ The program has successfully provided critical telecommunications services to thousands of hurricane survivors attempting to rebuild their lives, and T-Mobile USA, Inc. (“T-Mobile”) urges the Commission to extend the expiration date of the program by three months until June 1, 2006. By extending the Katrina Lifeline Program beyond its scheduled expiration, the Commission will afford thousands more hurricane survivors the opportunity to participate and benefit from the program.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the Commission took immediate steps to assist hurricane survivors by targeting universal service support for reconstruction and rebuilding efforts, including the creation of a special, temporary program pursuant to which eligible consumers could acquire free wireless services and handsets. T-Mobile and several other wireless carriers applied for and were granted temporary status as “eligible telecommunication carriers” or “ETCs” to provide wireless services at no charge under the Katrina Lifeline Program.² In the approximate three months since T-Mobile obtained ETC

¹ See *Lifeline and Link-Up*, Order, 20 FCC Rcd 16883 (2005) (adopting the Katrina Lifeline Program).

² See FCC Public Notice, Wireline Competition Bureau Announces the Designation of a Temporary Eligible Telecommunications Carrier for the Purpose of Providing the Hurricane Katrina Lifeline Assistance, 20 FCC Rcd 18983 (2005) (announcing T-Mobile’s designation as an ETC under the Katrina Lifeline Program).

status, it has provided wireless services at no charge to more than 25,000 hurricane survivors.³ The success of the Commission's and the wireless industry's efforts to assist those affected by the hurricane, however, will not be fully realized unless all qualified individuals have an opportunity to participate in the Katrina Lifeline Program.

T-Mobile's successful implementation of Katrina Lifeline Program is largely attributable to effective outreach efforts. T-Mobile took several steps to advertise and disseminate information regarding the availability and eligibility requirements of the Katrina Lifeline Program. A grassroots campaign was developed within the T-Mobile organization – focusing on the retail stores located in the Gulf Coast region – to help Hurricane Katrina survivors. Full page ads were run in local newspapers, and public service announcements were broadcast in the Gulf Coast region. T-Mobile stores printed and widely distributed fliers within affected regions.⁴ T-Mobile local outreach teams visited Federal Emergency Management Agency ("FEMA") headquarters to discuss implementation of the Katrina Lifeline Program and continue to work closely with FEMA officials to promote the program.

The outreach teams also visited temporary housing sites for displaced Hurricane Katrina survivors and other locations within affected communities, routinely setting up information tables and going door-to-door to distribute materials regarding the program. As a result of these efforts, consumers became knowledgeable about the program, its benefits and eligibility requirements.

Wireless service ensures that those affected by the hurricane, many of whom no longer have permanent residences and have lost virtually all of their personal belongings, have access to the resources needed for their recovery efforts. Program beneficiaries have been able to use the services provided by T-Mobile to maintain contact with their families, find employment and housing, and access emergency services. Qualified individuals – particularly those with low income and limited means – have been able to take advantage of wireless services that previously may have been unavailable to them.

³ Other wireless carriers that received temporary ETC status to provide wireless services under the Katrina Lifeline Program include ALLTEL Communications, Inc., Cellular South Licenses, Inc., Cingular Wireless, LLC, Sprint Nextel Corporation, TracFone Wireless, Inc., and Verizon Wireless.

⁴ Examples of a T-Mobile public service announcement and flier regarding the Katrina Lifeline Program are attached. T-Mobile offers four wireless Lifeline service plans, which include a combination of prepaid and post-paid plans for customers that may or may not need new handsets. T-Mobile will continue to offer these plans to eligible hurricane survivors if the Commission extends the Katrina Lifeline Program. *See* Application of T-Mobile USA, Inc. for Temporary Designation as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier, WC Docket No. 03-109 (filed Nov. 10, 2005, supplemented Nov. 16, 2005 and Nov. 18, 2005).

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T-Mobile continues to receive a steady stream of hurricane survivors seeking to participate in the Katrina Lifeline Program. It would not serve the public interest if the program is cut short when many eligible consumers remain who have not yet had an opportunity to participate in the program. For example, displaced survivors continue to return to the Gulf coast region who may not have known about or otherwise been able to obtain services under the program. A short extension of the program would allow these people to participate in and benefit from the program. Accordingly, the Commission should extend the Katrina Lifeline Program until June 1, 2006.

If you have any questions regarding T-Mobile's participation in the Katrina Lifeline Program and this request, please contact the undersigned.

Very truly yours,

/s/ Thomas J. Sugrue

Thomas J. Sugrue
Vice President, Government Affairs

cc: Fred Campbell
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